



# IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON GENDER AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

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## ABSTRACT

In February 2006, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), India's flagship rural employment scheme, was inaugurated. It is the largest and most comprehensive social security and public works programme in the world. The purpose of this article is to investigate women's participation in the MGNREGA programme and to make a few recommendations for its effective implementation. The MGNREGA's essential principles and high potential have been thoroughly established seven years after its adoption. The fact that nearly a quarter (25 percent) of all rural households in the country engage in the programme each year attests to its widespread appeal. With a countrywide participation rate of 47%, research suggests that women are more actively participating in the scheme than in other occupations. According to research, MGNREGA provides an essential job option for women who would otherwise be unemployed or underemployed. According to preliminary studies, MGNREGA's expanded access to paid job has benefited women's socioeconomic standing and general well-being. Women have more control over their wages after MGNREGA, according to several surveys, and have been spending them on repaying modest debts, paying for their children's schooling, and covering medical bills, among other things. Women's mobilisation through community-based organisations has boosted outreach and raised awareness, as well as increased women's engagement in all parts of the Scheme. Women rely extensively on natural common property resources such as water, fuel, and so on, and because MGNREGA plays a key role in natural resource regeneration, the Scheme appears to be bolstering women's livelihood stability.

**KEYWORDS:** Rural Employment, Empowerment, MGNREGA, Women's Participation.

## INTRODUCTION:

Gender is an unavoidable driving force behind India's growth and development. Women make up a large portion of India's chronically poor population. They are confronted with life's vulnerabilities. Gender discrimination has occurred in areas such as education, employment, property and resource control, and participation in decision-making processes in the public, political, and domestic domains, among others.

The government has devised many programmes to help women escape poverty and life's insecurity. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which was enacted in 2005, is one such women-friendly initiative. The NREGA was announced on September 7, 2005, in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Notification dated September 7, 2005. Following that, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was titled in his honour, and it is now known as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Since its establishment, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) has been one of the most progressive pieces of legislation passed. Women will be given precedence under the NREGA, with at least one-third of the beneficiaries being women who have registered and requested job under the scheme. NREGA can play a significant role in economically empowering women and setting the groundwork for increased independence and self-esteem by creating jobs for women in the villages at fair rates.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In their study on the influence of MGNREGS on gender relations in 102 districts across 27 states, Dheeraja C. and H.Rao titled 'Changing Gender Relations: A Study of MGNREGA across Different States' (2010). Gender relations favoured women in the post-MGNREGS period, according to the study. Women's self-esteem, self-image, and confidence levels improved as a result of their involvement in MGNREGS. SHGs aided in the transformation of gender relations among members, which MGNREGS consolidated. Following the adoption of MGNREGS, women's Gender Relation Index (GRI), which includes social, economic, and political components at both the household and community levels, increased.

The chapter on Gender and Social Empowerment in the Ministry of Rural Development, GoI's MGNREGA SAMEEKSHA AN ANTHOLOGY OF RESEARCH STUDIES ON THE MGNREGA, 2005 (2006-2012), stated that "Kerala had the highest women participation at 93 percent, while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir had low levels of women participation at 18 percent, respectively."

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine the limitations of MGNREGA and suggest a few recommendations.
2. To study percentage change of women participation
3. To study women participation in MGNREGA Gujarat and Uttaranchal

## METHODOLOGY:

Secondary data was employed in the current investigation. Secondary data was gathered from the Ministry of Rural Development (GoI) and NREGA implementation status websites. In terms of the percentage of women participating in MGNREGA, the contrast between the two states has been underlined.

## Some Legal Provisions of Mgnrega and Women:

Priority will be given to women when it comes to employment, with at least one-third of the beneficiaries being women who have registered and requested job under the scheme (NREGA 2005, Schedule II, 6)

There shall be no discrimination primarily on the basis of gender in any job under the plan, and the terms of the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (25 of 1976) shall be complied with (NREGA 2005, Schedule II, 34)

If there are five or more children under the age of six years accompanying the women working at any site, arrangements must be made for one of them to be delegated to care after the youngsters (NREGA 2005, Schedule II, 28)

Women must make up at least one-third of the total number of non-official members of the central council (NREGA 2005, Part II, and Sec-3i)

There is no gender discrimination in the fee schedule (NREGA 2005, Part II, Sec 3ii) Some requirements, such as work within a five-kilometer radius of the house, the absence of a contractor, the flexibility in choosing periods and months of employment, and so on, are not only for women, but they are beneficial to rural women in some ways.

## Women Participation in MGNREGA:

MGNREGA emphasised the need of gender equity and empowerment in its conception as a rural wage employment programme. The Act and accompanying Guidelines contain a number of provisions aimed at ensuring that women have equitable and simple access to employment, good working conditions, equal pay, and representation on decision-making bodies.

From the Financial Year 2006-07 to the Financial Year 2011-12, over Rs 53000 crore was spent on wages for women, and women accounted for around 47 percent of total person days generated. The findings of this study revealed that such a transfer had an impact on women's economic and social empowerment. It also examines the research on the reasons behind women's high engagement in the programme, as well as inter-state differences in participation. MGNREGA has been a beneficial and vital scheme for women in general.

**Women's Participation:** At the national level, women's participation in the plan has beyond the statutory minimum requirement of 33%; women's person-days of employment were close to 50% in FY 2013-14 alone.

## Impact of MGNREGA on Women's Participation:

MGNREGA is critical in meeting both the practical and strategic needs of

women's involvement. The following parameters can be used to assess the impact of MGNREGA on women's participation:

#### **Income Consumption Effects:**

We imply an increase in women workers' income and, as a result, their ability to choose their consumption baskets when we say income-consumption impacts. Consumption is given more weight in the analysis of MGNREGA since it is the most important component in determining income-consumption impacts. If a woman earns but is unable to spend for her own needs or surrenders her earnings to the household's leader, she is not empowered. MGNREGA empowers women by allowing them to earn money on their own and spend some of it on their own needs.

#### **Effects within the Household:**

Women have an important role in providing economic resources for their families, but their contribution goes unnoticed because they do a lot of unpaid work. Male dominance in intra-household decisions has been shown in rural settings. MGNREGA has had a considerable impact on turning certain unpaid employment into paid job and expanding the scope of women's decision-making in domestic concerns.

#### **Effects at the Community Level:**

Despite the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendments to the Constitution, women's participation in the government process at the local and district levels is limited. In many locations, however, women's participation has increased since the MGNREGA was implemented. The Gramsabha conference organised in conjunction with MGNREGA drew a huge number of female workers. One of the main accomplishments of this act is the empowerment of women at the community level.

#### **Expanding Options and Capabilities:**

MGNREGA has broadened women's options by allowing them to make an income on their own. If a woman is reliant on the head of the family, her choices become a point of contention in the household. MGNREGA has increased women's ability to utilise their earnings.

#### **MGNREGA Draebacks and Women:**

##### **Child Care Facilities are Not Available:**

Despite the fact that the act provides this provision, one of the primary flaws of the act is the lack of crèche facilities on the job site. According to many research, women are concerned about their children while working at MGNREGA workplace, and some women refuse to take MGNREGA job opportunities due to the lack of adequate child care facilities.

#### **Awareness Level is Low:**

Women's involvement in many states is minimal due to a lack of understanding of the program's methodology and benefits. Many men have abandoned agricultural pursuits in favour of MGNREGA labour. The women have taken over the abandoned territory in agriculture.

#### **Work Environment:**

The majority of studies show that the nature of employment is also detrimental to women workers. Because the majority of the projects chosen were related to rural connectivity and the rehabilitation of local water bodies, which required earthwork and the use of physical force, male workers were preferred above female labour.

#### **Facilities on the Worksite are Inappropriate:**

MGNREGA money will be used to provide safe drinking water, a resting area, a changing room, first aid, and a recreational facility for children, among other things. However, most research found that, other from a drinking water facility, all other amenities were scarce.

#### **Contractors Present Illegally:**

The continuous illegal presence of contractors has a major negative impact on job availability and women's capacity to benefit from it. Women workers are more likely to be harassed on job where contractors are present than on worksite where there are no contractors.

#### **Women's Participation in Gram Sabhas is Low:**

Women's under representation Another significant disadvantage is the Gram Sabhas. Because decisions on the implementation of NREGA projects are meant to be made in gramme sabhas, and because women are not represented in those sabhas, policies are not created with women's needs in mind.

#### **SUGGESTIONS:**

The wage employment program's low success can be attributed to a lack of focus on social and gender inequity in the establishment of productive assets. Women have no choice but to do whatever labour is offered due to their poor health and literacy, as well as their primary responsibilities of household and caring. The solutions listed below can be very useful in improving women's gendered conditions.

#### **Gram Sabha Women's Participation:**

Women make up a very small percentage of these institutions. Because choices on the implementation of NREGA projects are expected to be made in gramme

sabhas, it is critical that the majority of women vote in gramme sabha elections, as there is a pressing need for their advancement in society.

#### **Implementing Poverty Understanding:**

Through a better knowledge of the causes of poverty, the programme would be able to make a bigger impact on poverty and development. MGNREGA is a cash-based programme that helps people in mountainous areas overcome poverty and vulnerability. The programme must discover ways to integrate itself into people's daily lives, tackling ecological poverty rather than just income poverty through appropriate programme design improvements.

#### **Fast Mobile Banking for Payment:**

This program's ability to assist women to save money is a significant accomplishment. Making it easier for them to save for certain goods through easily accessible bank accounts is one method to improve their well-being. Even when money is deposited in a bank or post office, getting access to it is typically difficult, making frequent withdrawals unpleasant and hence encouraging full withdrawal. A better payment system based on quick mobile banking is a critical requirement of the hour.

#### **Assignment of the Contract to the Landlord:**

The unauthorised presence of contractors continues to have a negative impact on the availability of work and its benefits for women. Women workers are more likely to be harassed on job where contractors are present than on worksite where there are no contractors.

Aside from that, working conditions at contractor-run sites are more exploitative. As a result, the owner of the property should be given top priority when it comes to contract assignment.

#### **WAGE PAYMENT SYSTEM:**

Create special Statements of Rates (SOR) for women, preferably based on a systematic time and motion research, to ensure that they earn the stipulated minimum wage, and provide 100 days of work to all workers, including women, to speed the process of women's empowerment.

#### **In MGNREGA Policies, Gender Equality:**

The major challenge is to repurpose existing equipment to address persistent gender inequities in both the economic and socio-cultural sectors. Women's interests and the engagement of a sufficient number of women in management and social audits of the creation and maintenance of productive assets are critical for their empowerment. Sustainable development requires an integrated approach that connects equality-based rights to control productive assets with gender inclusive, participatory rural institutions.

#### **The Importance of Self-help Groups (SHGS):**

SHGs are one of the potential grassroots institutions that can be used as a tool for implementing gender-responsive guaranteed employment in the construction of productive assets. However, improving the ability of SHG members through skill training and enforcing gender equality in management and control rights to productive assets is vital; only then will SHGs be able to operate as an effective rural development agency under MGNREGA.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

In terms of women's empowerment, it's worth noting that, while women's empowerment or gender equality isn't a goal of MGNREGA, it can and does activate processes that help women become more empowered. This is because MGNREGA gives women, both employed and unemployed, the opportunity to earn minimum salaries and participate in village-level institutions such as Gram Sabhas, Social Audits, and so on.

Women's mobilisation through community-based organisations has boosted outreach and raised awareness, as well as increased women's engagement in all parts of the Scheme.

Women rely extensively on natural common property resources such as water, fuel, and other natural resources, and because MGNREGA plays an essential role in natural resource regeneration, the Scheme appears to increase women's livelihood stability.

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